Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A transgenic plant comprising a recombinant polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide having a conserved domain,

~~wherein said polypeptide has the property of SEQ ID NO: 4 of regulating abiotic stress tolerance in a plant when said polypeptide is overexpressed, and~~ wherein:

~~the conserved domain is at least 83% identical to amino acid coordinates 26-116 of SEQ ID NO: 4~~ the recombinant polynucleotide specifically hybridizes to the complement of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 3 under stringent conditions comprising two wash steps of 1x SSC, 1% SDS at 60° C for 45-60 minutes for each wash step; and

the polypeptide binds to a transcription regulating region comprising the motif CCAAT and has the property of SEQ ID NO: 4 of regulating abiotic stress tolerance in a plant when the polypeptide is overexpressed;

wherein said binding confers increased abiotic stress tolerance in said transgenic plant as compared to a non-transformed plant that does not overexpress the polypeptide, and

wherein the increased abiotic stress tolerance is selected from the group consisting of increased tolerance to cold, increased tolerance to salt, increased tolerance to mannitol, and increased tolerance to water deprivation.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The transgenic plant of Claim 1, wherein the conserved domain comprises:

$Asn-(Xaa)_4-Lys-(Xaa)_{33-34}-Asn-Gly$;

where Xaa is any amino acid residue;

and overexpression of said polypeptide confers increased abiotic stress tolerance in said transgenic plant as compared to a non-transformed plant that does not overexpress the polypeptide.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The transgenic plant of Claim 1, wherein said conserved domain comprises:

$Ser-(Xaa)_9-Asn-(Xaa)_4-Lys-(Xaa)_{33-34}-Asn-Gly$;

where Xaa is any amino acid residue;

and overexpression of said polypeptide confers increased abiotic stress tolerance in said transgenic plant as compared to a non-transformed plant that does not overexpress the polypeptide.

Claim 4 (original): The transgenic plant of Claim 1, wherein said polypeptide comprises SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The transgenic plant of Claim 1, wherein said recombinant polynucleotide has a nucleotide sequence that specifically hybridizes ~~over its full length to the complement of SEQ ID NO:3~~ under stringent conditions ~~including two wash steps of 6x SSC and 65° C for 10-30 minutes~~ to the complement of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 3, wherein the stringent conditions include two wash steps of 0.5X SSC, 0.1% SDS at 65° C of 10 - 30 minutes for each step.

Claim 6 (currently amended): The transgenic plant of Claim [[5]] 1, wherein said nucleotide sequence comprises SEQ ID NO: 3.

Claims 7-9 (canceled)

Claim 10 (currently amended): The transgenic plant of Claim 1, wherein ~~the recombinant polynucleotide comprises~~ expression of the polypeptide is regulated by a constitutive, inducible, or tissue-specific promoter.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The transgenic plant of Claim 1, wherein said conserved domain is at least [[86%]] 83% identical with the amino acid coordinates 26-116 of SEQ ID NO: 4.

Claim 12 (currently amended): A method for producing a transgenic plant having increased tolerance to an abiotic stress as compared to a non-transformed plant that does not overexpress the polypeptide, the method steps comprising:

(a) providing an expression vector comprising

~~(i)~~ a nucleotide sequence that encodes a polypeptide;

~~having a conserved domain that is at least 83% identical to amino acid coordinates 26-116 of SEQ ID NO: 4~~ wherein the nucleotide sequence specifically hybridizes to the complement of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 3 under stringent conditions comprising two wash steps of 1x SSC, 1% SDS at 60° C for 45-60 minutes for each wash step;

and the polypeptide binds to a transcription regulating region comprising the motif CCAAT and has the property of regulating abiotic stress tolerance in a plant as compared to a non-transformed plant that does not overexpress the polypeptide;

wherein the abiotic stress is selected from the group consisting cold, salt, mannitol, and water deprivation; ~~and~~

~~(ii) regulatory elements flanking the nucleotide sequence, said regulatory elements controlling expression of said nucleotide sequence in a target plant;~~

(b) introducing the expression vector into a plant cell; and

(c) growing the plant cell into ~~a plant and allowing the plant to overexpress said polypeptide~~ the transgenic plant.

Claim 13 (currently amended): The method of Claim 12, wherein said nucleotide sequence specifically hybridizes ~~over its full length~~ to the complement of the sequence set forth as SEQ ID NO: 3 under stringent conditions ~~including two wash steps of 6x SSC and 65° C for 10-30 minutes~~ that include two wash steps of 0.5X SSC, 0.1% SDS at 65° C of 10 - 30 minutes for each step.

Claim 14 (canceled)

Claim 15 (previously presented): The method of Claim 12, the method steps further comprising:

(d) crossing said abiotic stress tolerant plant with itself or another plant;

(e) selecting seed that develops as a result of said crossing; and

(f) growing a progeny plant from the seed,

thus producing a transgenic progeny plant having increased tolerance to the abiotic stress.

Claims 16-35 (canceled)

Claim 36 (new): A transgenic seed produced by the transgenic plant of Claim 1.

Claim 37 (new): A transgenic plant comprising a recombinant polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide;

wherein the polypeptide comprises SEQ ID NO: 4; and the polypeptide regulates abiotic stress tolerance in a plant when the polypeptide is overexpressed; and

wherein the polypeptide binds to a transcription regulating region comprising the motif CCAAT;

wherein said binding confers increased abiotic stress tolerance in said transgenic plant as compared to a non-transformed plant that does not overexpress the polypeptide, and

wherein the increased abiotic stress tolerance is selected from the group consisting of increased tolerance to cold, increased tolerance to salt, increased tolerance to mannitol, and increased tolerance to water deprivation.

Claim 38 (new): The transgenic plant of Claim 37, wherein expression of the polypeptide is regulated by a constitutive, inducible, or tissue-specific promoter.